



## MEMORANDUM

To: Jeremy Ginsberg, Town of Darien

From: Tom Brown

Date: November 10, 2015

Subject: Strategy Development

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A series of recommended Parking Management Plan strategies is presented below. The strategies were selected to directly respond to the range of issues and opportunities identified during the Downtown Parking Study. Where similar strategies have been recommended in previous studies, those recommendations are paraphrased within blue-shaded call-out boxes.

The strategies are organized into three categories, as follows.

- **Optimizing Management**– Strategies to improve the general operations and usability of the parking system.
- **Expanding Supply** – Strategies for expanding the total number of physical spaces, increasing the capacity of existing parking spaces and lots, or making existing, underutilized spaces more accessible, recognizable, and/or viable to better accommodate parking demand.
- **Reducing Demand/Improving Mobility** – Strategies that seek to reduce demand by improving non-drive-along mobility

# OPTIMIZING MANAGEMENT

## FOCUS ON PERFORMANCE AND CUSTOMER SERVICE

### Seek Consistent Availability

Downtown parking studies consistently reveal a strong preference among all stakeholder groups for “convenience” in choosing where to park. Convenience is determined by destination, and the general concentration of destinations within downtown districts tends to lead to a small subset of available parking options being highly coveted by most drivers. This, in turn, can create a strong impression that “there is nowhere to park downtown”, even when plenty of less-convenient spaces sit empty.

### Customer Parking

On-street spaces along primary commercial streets are the most likely to generate exceptional levels of demand. Unless actively managed, these spaces will lack availability during high-demand periods. As a result, it is common to find these spaces actively regulated through pricing and/or limits on duration. The most commonly cited objective of this active management is “turnover” — increasing the number of cars that can be accommodated by reducing average parking duration, and “turning over” the same spaces consistently throughout the day. A more precise objective, that many cities are starting to embrace, however, is “availability” — the presence of empty spaces at any given time.

Ideally, one or two on-street spaces will remain empty/available, even during demand peaks, along all blocks<sup>1</sup>. Similarly, when ~10% or more of spaces are available within off-street locations, these facilities feel well managed and viable for short-term parking needs. 2015 occupancy surveys indicate that, among customer-oriented parking options, availability is constrained during just a few hours during the weekday, midday period, with potential new constraints emerging with growing evening activity in certain areas. Monitoring availability at these times can be as simple as having parking enforcement officers note the time and location upon observing an on-street block that is fully occupied, or an off-street lot with just a few remaining spaces available.

If functional availability can be maintained, turnover and parking duration do not need to be actively managed. This is a significant advantage, as these measures are much more difficult to document and alter through management and regulation. By contrast, relative levels of availability can be measured through regular observation, and undesirable levels of availability can be addressed by adjusting pricing or time limits.

### Commuter Parking

Rail commuters have also demonstrated a clear preference for certain off-street facilities. Among daily parking options, the lots that abut the train station are, unsurprisingly, filled to capacity well before other options accumulate significant occupancy, indicating that these spaces may be under-priced relative to the value of their convenient location.

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<sup>1</sup> For off-street parking facilities, utilization of 90% is considered effectively full, as drivers cannot easily find available spaces.

Among permit-holders, the permit wait list for the Leroy West facility indicates a strong preference for this location among Darien residents. 2015 occupancy surveys indicate existing capacity to sell more monthly permits to reduce the wait list. As the Town determines that this condition is consistent, on a regular basis, additional permits will be sold to those on the wait list, making better use of this resource, while at the same time ensuring that spaces are available, even on high-demand mornings, for all permit holders.

## **Expand Pricing as a Management Tool**

### **Customer Parking**

#### *From the 2007 Parking Study*

- Consider paid parking for 1-hour locations.

#### *From the Route 1 Corridor Study*

- Implement paid parking for short-term parking.

What drivers tend to resent the most about metered parking is not the cost, which is often quite modest compared to what is spent by a typical shopper/diner in a successful downtown. While no one prefers to pay for something that they could get for free, what really tends to rankle drivers about meters is 1) the fear of getting a ticket if their meter “runs out”, and 2) the inconvenience of having to have enough change for the amount of parking they want/need. The first of these objections is an enforcement/ fine issue that can be addressed through best practices outlined below.

The second is removed by the Pay by Plate meters that Darien recently installed to support its daily parking lots. The convenience of these meters is further enhanced by the Pay by Phone option that the Town has also made available to daily parkers. This presents an opportunity to implement pricing strategies to maintain customer parking access during peak-demand times.

Current utilization levels across the day suggest that customer parking access is generally favorable outside of the weekday, midday period. As such, pricing these spaces to improve conditions at these times may not be worth the cost of installing additional meters. However, as demand spreads beyond this period, and particularly as evening demand begins to increase, this option may become more critical to providing customer-friendly levels of access when Downtown is most in demand.

### **Commuter Parking**

#### *From the 2013 SWRPA Rail Station Parking Study Update*

- Increase the daily parking rate from \$3 to \$5 or higher.
- Increase permit prices by 10% each year.

The current rates for Commuter Permit and Daily parking rates at Darien’s rail commuter lots are below regional averages. Maintaining rates below regional averages artificially inflates parking demand among the Town’s limited parking resources, and creates excess parking traffic during peak congestion periods. Increasing both the permit and daily rates to be in line with comparable

peer rates should therefore be expected to reduce demand at Town lots. Another valid option is charging a premium rate for clearly preferred locations, such as the two Daily Parking lots that abut the train station.

## **Enforce Time-Limits with LPR**

The License Plate Reader (LPR) technology available to Town enforcement officers makes time-limit enforcement much more effective. Used to track vehicle parking activity across the full parking system, it can make it virtually impossible for employees to skirt time limits by moving their cars every two or three hours.

## **Adopt Enforcement Best Practices**

Typically, efforts to improve enforcement focus on increased ticketing, invariably to the frustration of businesses and their customers, alike. Enforcement is essential to the effective management of public resources; protecting those who play by the rules from those that would abuse them. Pricing and time limits cannot be effective if ineffective enforcement results in few payments and lots of daylong parking in spaces meant for customer access. However, a successful enforcement program should work with fewer tickets, supporting an overall system that makes compliance easy and comfortable.

There is an emerging model for enforcement that does this through a combination of incremental fines and “first-time forgiveness”.

## **Introduce Incremental Fines**

The current fine for parking violations is likely not a deterrent to many Darien drivers, particularly those that place a high value on convenience when choosing among parking options. At the same time, there are likely many visitors to Darien who would be put off by the same cost, and curb their interests in returning. Even modest fines can be deeply resented, particularly among first-time offenders who simply made a mistake. Keeping the fine for first-time infractions very low can address this, while increasing the fine for subsequent violations can ensure that continual skirting of parking regulations becomes unaffordable to even the most convenience-motivated drivers.

## **Start Fines at \$0**

This system, ideally should start with a "courtesy" ticket (no fine), that includes detailed information on parking options, pricing, and regulations, as well as information on the escalating fine schedule for repeat violations.

Combining these two components would look something like the following.

- The first ticket in any 12-month period does not incur a fine;
- A second violation within 12 months would be fined at the current level; and
- Subsequent violations would go up substantially, perhaps doubling.

## Monitor Performance

The following monitoring program is recommended to track the effectiveness of new management strategies, and of the overall PMP as it evolves. This is the only way to ensure that management is accomplishing the core objective of consistent availability among all parking options.

- Weekly visual assessments of availability along Boston Post Road and high-demand side-street blocks during midday peak-demand period (1 PM), as well as the emerging evening peak period (6PM).
- Quarterly system-wide counts of:
  - All on-street spaces and lots during midday peaks
  - All short-term lots during midday peaks
  - All monthly-commuter lots at mid-morning and mid-afternoon
  - All daily-commuter lots at mid-morning and mid-afternoon
- Quarterly visual assessments of all spaces during a Friday evening or Saturday afternoon to monitor growth of parking demand at these times.

## ADOPT A PARKING BENEFIT DISTRICT FUNDING MODEL

Figure 1 Promoting a Parking Benefit District Approach



Establishing a Parking Benefit District is an important management strategy for ensuring that that parking activity generates funding to support parking maintenance and management. It also provides an opportunity to promote the fact that parking revenue directly funds local area improvements. Spending this revenue on conspicuous enhancement of the Downtown or rail commuting experience is therefore recommended. These can include:

- Traffic-calming to ensure that the area can be safely and effectively accessed via walking, cycling, and transit;

- Streetscape, lighting, and other pedestrian enhancements;
- Bike/scooter parking that can improve active commuting and reduce parking demand;
- Signage, wayfinding, and information investments;
- Etc.

As part of organizing a Parking Benefit District, will be important to formally separate rail station parking revenues (which must be reinvested at the station) from parking enforcement/parking benefit district revenues (which can be reinvested as identified by the District).

## EXPANDING SUPPLY

Under the existing circumstances, there is no pressing need for more parking in downtown, however, as redevelopment continues, strategies and actions need to be applied to ensure that parking supply is appropriate for demand, to encourage continual investment and growth in the downtown. In the meantime, there remains significant opportunity to expand how much Downtown parking is provided as shared, public parking, either through raw supply expansions, increasing shared access to private facilities, or expansion of the “effective capacity” of existing supplies.

### EXPAND ON-STREET PARKING IN CERTAIN LOCATIONS

In any downtown, on-street parking tends to be the most sought after by visitors, and the most valued by local businesses. It is also one of the cheapest forms of parking to provide and maintain. Expanding the supply of such spaces, however, is generally limited to opportunities to re-assign curbside regulations.

Within Downtown Darien, two such opportunities appear to exist.

#### Tokeneke Road

The first few hundred or so feet of Tokeneke Road, off of Boston Post Road and opposite of the tracks, appear to offer ample room to convert the current No Parking Any Time regulations to short-term parking. This would directly benefit the several adjacent shops, and help signal that this block offers a solid extension of the commercial activity found along Boston Post Road. This would also help reduce pedestrian exposure to moving traffic as they cross Tokeneke Road, particularly if the added parking were to be combined with a curb extension to tighten the angle of right turns off of Boston Post Road.

Figure 2 Adding On-Street Parking on Tokeneke Could Help Businesses & Improve Pedestrian Safety



Image Source: Google Maps

The eastbound lane of Tokeneke Road is about 19' wide at this point. This provides plenty of room to add on-street parking. The rendering below depicts a redesign that would create 110' for curbside parking, a curb extension at the corner, and a pedestrian safety island for those crossing Tokeneke. The 110' of new parking should provide up to five new spaces to support adjacent retail uses, while the overall redesign helps improve one of the most problematic pedestrian crossing in the downtown.

Figure 3      More Parking and Safer Walking without any Changes to Boston Post Road



*Note: Any physical changes to Tokeneke Road would require Connecticut DOT approval.*

## **Grove Street**

Figure 4 A Redesign Could Make Grove Street Feel More Like a Neighborhood Shopping Street

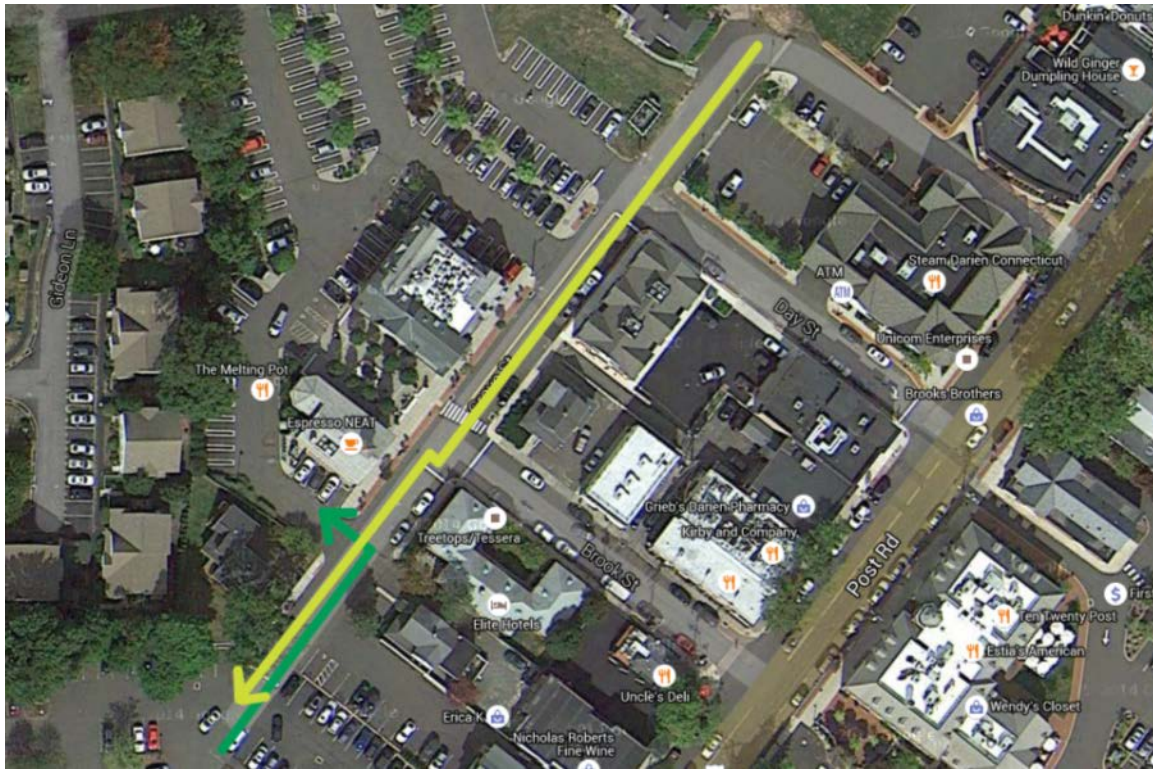


Grove Street is a short, three-block street that serves as a connector between several off-street lots and Boston Post Road. This road has recently, however, emerged as a burgeoning “second Main Street” for Downtown Darien, linking several new and established buildings that form a cluster of Downtown residences and a growing number of commercial storefronts. The likely moderate traffic volumes along this road should provide opportunity to re-explore lane widths and striping in order to make this street feel more pedestrian-friendly, and to shift some on-street parking to the side adjacent to the new retail uses.

The street is 30' wide (curb-to-curb), which doesn't really allow for parking on both sides *and* 2-way traffic. Nonetheless, there are options worth exploring that could help make this street feel more oriented to walking and the “park-once” commercial environment of downtown.

1. Create a two-way “yield street” by alternating parking on either side of the street, which creates a slower-speed environment by “jogging” the travel lanes and making street crossing feel shorter.
2. Convert most of the street to 1-way and add parking on both sides.
3. Stripe a 4' wide median with planters at the corners, creating 9' travel lanes and an 8' parking lane on one curbside. This would help slow traffic and provide pedestrian crossing refuges along this emerging retail street.
4. Add curb extensions at the corners. If nothing else is done, this would help shorten crossings to new retail destinations, as well as any new homes and offices, emphasizing the pedestrian-oriented, park-once environment in this emerging extension of downtown.

Figure 5 Making Most of Grove Street 1-Way Would Allow More Parking, Improve Pedestrian Conditions



## SEEK JOINT DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

### *From the 2007 Parking Study*

- The Commission in conjunction with the Board of Selectmen should explore opportunities for more public-private partnerships to take advantage of some of the underutilized private parking in and near the downtown in a manner that benefits all the stakeholder parties.

Rather than pursuing a "build it and they will come" approach to accommodating further Downtown growth, the Town and Parking Authority should engage developers currently exploring development/ redevelopment investments, in order to highlight mutually-beneficial joint-development opportunities in which the Town develops parking to support both the land uses at the new project and in the surrounding area.

Locations that offer opportunities to combine new, active land uses with shared parking expansions should be sought across Downtown. Joint development can provide an opportunity to attract investments in new land uses, sharing in the cost of meeting their parking needs. This same cost-sharing can also reduce the cost to the Town of expanding shared parking supplies within the Downtown or station areas. The optimal/ model outcome of a resulting joint-development engagement would include the following.

- New parking sufficient to meet the needs of project and provide additional capacity for nearby land uses and trip generators
- Active land uses along all streets

- Parking that is setback, or otherwise visually obscured from the street, and accessed via side streets
- Joint financing to reduce each party's construction costs
- Public management of all/most on-site parking

## **DEVELOP ZONING STRATEGIES**

### ***From the Action Plan for Revitalization of Downtown***

- Eliminate or decrease regulatory barriers by developing less stringent parking regulations.

### ***From the 2007 Parking Study***

- Support gradual shift by new development or redevelopment to greater reliance on the municipal parking supply
- Add options for meeting the parking requirements in the downtown
- Provide more, and clear, incentives for developers to meet Darien parking objectives.
- Reduce all parking requirements within this area.
- Include reductions for the creation of municipal spaces.
- Add maximum as well as minimum space requirements for parking.
- Allow a fee to be paid in-lieu of providing parking spaces.
- The fee per space would best be determined based on an analysis and advice of a parking financing expert.

### ***From the Route 1 Corridor Study***

- Consider reducing mandated parking requirements.
- Consider adopting parking maximums.

There are four primary opportunities that can be created, while retaining core zoning strategies that continue to be effective, through a revised set of Downtown-specific parking requirements. It is recommended that the Town give serious consideration to revisions that could provide the following.

1. Ensuring that minimum parking requirements are not a barrier to the level of investment and types of projects desired for the area. This can happen when minimum parking requirements would consume too much of a potential development site (common among infill opportunities) or add too much to the cost of a project that would otherwise be viable.
2. Discouraging private, "accessory" parking facilities, which can undermine efforts to promote walkable, transit-friendly land-use densities. Accessory parking within walkable, downtown environments creates excessive numbers of driveways, and forces visitors to drive and re-park, rather than walk, to travel between nearby destinations.
3. Encouraging shared parking provision at private developments, which will help promote infill development on smaller parcels. Darien's existing zoning regulations strongly encourage shared parking through donation or easement of land located behind buildings for the construction of Town-managed, public parking lots. As land suitable for such arrangements decreases, a new approach should focus on encouraging the provision

- of shared, public parking as part of private development. Such facilities could either be managed by the Town, through an easement similar to what is used today, or by the property owner, according to parameters outlined in the development's certificate of occupancy.
4. Allowing developers to fund public parking, in lieu of meeting parking demand/requirements on site. Currently, developers contribute land, in lieu of developing accessory parking. As suitable land for such arrangements become scarcer, the cost of building and maintaining the shared parking meant to support new development will require new revenues, which can be provided with this recommended alternative to the current approach.

## **Update Parking Regulations**

A very basic approach to set a more appropriate schedule of parking regulations for Downtown would:

- Allow all requirements to be met through an In Lieu Fee, or comparable alternative (such as when there is an opportunity to cede site area to the Town for shared parking);
- Establish a maximum standard for non-shared parking, based on current minimum requirements, allowing parking to be provided above this standard only if all excess spaces are made available as a shared resource; and
- Identify additional capital investment requirements within the Site Plan Regulations Requirement for providing multimodal access in addition to vehicle parking such as bike parking, car-share access, , and transit amenities. (This would expand on the Town's current practice of requiring sidewalk enhancements).

This would address several issues and opportunities identified in the 2007 Parking Study, including the "lack of clarity" on parking requirements, expectations, and alternatives and the State-granted legal authority to establish an In Lieu Fee strategy.

## **Develop a Strategic In Lieu Fee Rate**

To make In Lieu Fee strategies even more effective, the fee rate can be set at a sliding scale in order to encourage larger projects to develop on-site parking, while making the option affordable and attractive to developers of smaller sites.

This would make it feasible for smaller projects to be built with no on-site parking, preserving their full lot for higher-value uses and avoiding inefficient, sidewalk-disrupting driveways along Downtown streets. At the same time, the fee increments would make it less likely that larger projects that have a more suitable footprint for parking would waive all of their requirements.

The figure below shows how this might translate for projects of various sizes/ parking requirements, using a sample base fee of \$5,000, and a fee increment of \$1,000<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> More detailed cost analysis should be conducted prior to establishing the in lieu fee.

Figure 6      Sample Incremental Fee Table

# of Spaces	Per Space Fee @ \$5,000 + (\$1,000 X # of Spaces)	Total Fee
1	\$6,000	\$6,000
2	\$7,000	\$14,000
3	\$8,000	\$24,000
40	\$45,000	\$1,800,000
50	\$55,000	\$2,750,000

Recommendations for similar changes to the current zoning code have been identified in several, previous studies.

## EXPAND EFFECTIVE CAPACITIES

The following strategies can expand the “effective capacity” of existing parking supplies, either by making greater occupancy levels possible within individual facilities, by redistributing demand to increase use of facilities that tend to have excess capacity at peak-demand times, or simply by making existing parking options more readily apparent and appealing.

### Expand Off-Peak Resident Parking Options

Allow residents to park in Town-managed short-term lots, using their Town-issued permits to exempt them from time limits, between 4PM and 10AM. These lots offer ample capacity outside of the weekday, midday peak-demand period. Using this capacity to allow residents more parking flexibility to ease some of the constraints downtown residents commonly experience with the current parking system. As customer parking demand continues to increase during evening periods, this option can be restricted to certain locations, preserving the locations most favored by customers for short-term parking only.

### Promote Employee Parking on Old Kings Highway South

Parking along this street is limited to two hours, despite very low utilization. The Town recently improved the delineation of parking spaces along the south side to encourage use of these spaces. Promoting use of these spaces by downtown employees with permits parking could shift employee parking demand out of the Center Street municipal lots thereby freeing up spaces in the Center Street lots for customers/shoppers. This can be enforced using existing employee permits, or the Town could explore the option of providing a special permit or sticker for this street, at a discount relative to the standard permit, further incentivizing use of this “remote” parking option.

**Figure 7**      Parking is Allowed on Both Sides of Old Kings Hwy South but is Generally Unused



Image Source: Google Maps

## **Simplify the Regulatory Geography**

The simplest most effective wayfinding strategy for directing drivers to their “right fit” parking solution is to simplify the geographic distribution of parking prices and restrictions. For Downtown Darien, this would mean varying as little as possible from something like the following.

- Boston Post Road – 1-hour parking
- Side streets (connecting to Boston Post Road)– 2-hour parking
- All other streets – No time limit
- Downtown lots – 2-hour parking, with 3-hour spaces clearly marked toward rear of lots
- All Commuter Permit lots – Permits before 10AM, daily parking after 10AM

Figure 8 1-Hour Spaces on Tokeneke add Complexity and are Under-Utilized



## Explore Public Valet to Expand Short-Term Parking Capacity

An on-street public valet dropoff/pickup can greatly expand access to on-street parking during high-demand times. These services provide a high level of parking convenience, make effective use of low-demand off-street locations, and promote park-once by allowing the service to be used as an extension of the Town's public parking operations.

Unlike other valet programs that serve only one business, public valets are designed to serve business on a district scale. This allows the valet service to directly support Park Once objectives,

allowing drivers to visit as many Downtown destinations as they desire, without having to find second and third parking spaces.

By dedicating just a few on-street spaces, used for dropoff and pickup, public valet can greatly expand the capacity of curbside capacities on high-demand blocks. For customers, these services offer an easy alternative to finding on-street parking, or dealing with off-street facilities, by allowing drivers to drop-off their car at a central location, shop, eat, catch a movie, run errands, etc. and not pick up their car until they are ready to go home.

Just as importantly, valet services can facilitate shared parking arrangements, by limiting access to the shared facility to an identifiable service that can assume responsibility for all risk. This can open up access to private parking lots that might otherwise remain significantly underutilized.

## **Explore Park-&-Ride Valet to Expand Daily Commuter Parking Capacity**

Cities, including New Haven and Metropark, NJ are beginning to expand the effective capacity of constrained park-and-ride resources by providing valet service at commuter rail stations. The valet service at Metropark is offered at the same \$5 day rate for self-parking. Financially, it is a break-even operation, making it a sustainable strategy for expanding station-parking capacities and providing a high level of customer service. By making use of tandem parking options that do not work with self-parking operations, the valet service can accommodate approximately 120 extra cars per day.

A similar opportunity may be possible at Darien Train Station, using valet drop-off to extend “front-door” parking options for commuters beyond the capacity of the two on-site lots. The Leroy East lot might be an ideal location to set aside for valet-only, tandem parking for such a service, expanding the effective-capacity of this lot, which is located near-enough to station entrance and exits to make valet feasible.

Another option would be to setup a valet service within the Leroy West, providing drop-off and pickup near the entrance, while using tandem parking to maximize the effective capacity of the back area of this lot, which tends to be underutilized.

The Town has informally investigated valet parking for this purpose, and some of the obstacles identified then remain challenges for a valet operation. Primarily, these are linked to the logistics of providing a valet service, including the cost of staffing such an operation. To be viable, a valet service would have to be offered at a premium, relative to current self-parking rates.

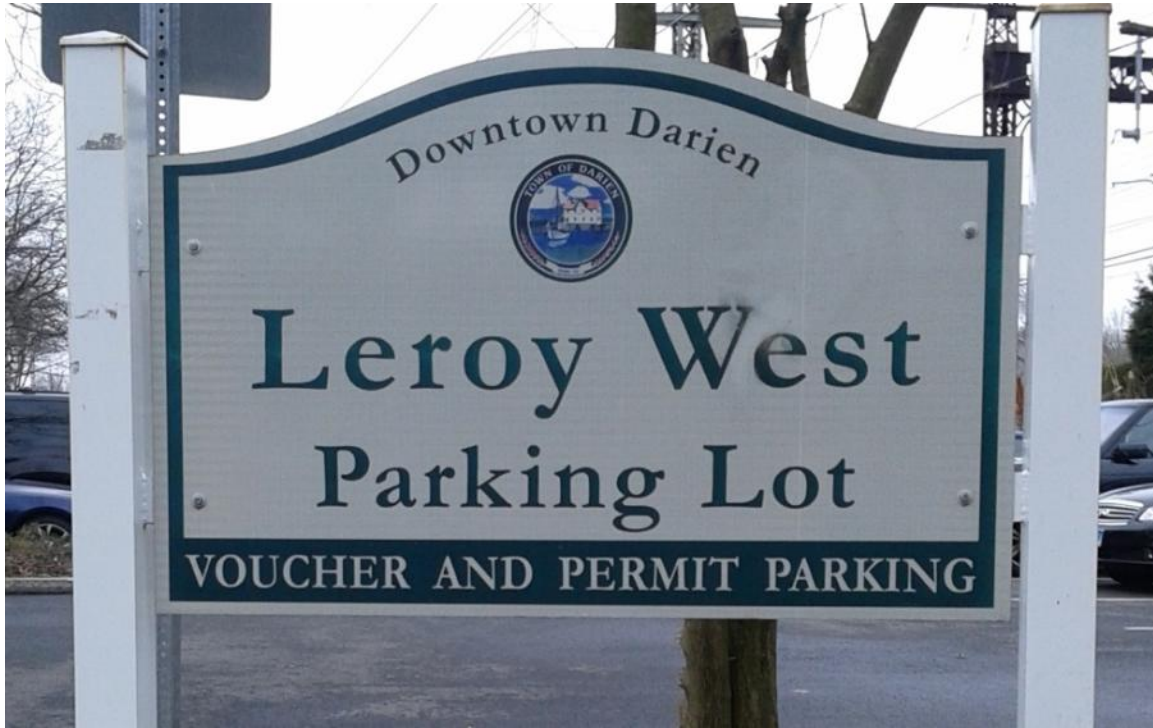
## **Improve/Expand Wayfinding and Information**

While commuters and residents quickly learn the location and regulations of available parking options, visitors tend to have a short window of opportunity before becoming frustrated by a lack of intuitive information, or guidance-signage, pointing them toward the right options. Without clear information at each location, visiting drivers can become intimidated by the uncertainty and any perceived threat of citation or towing.

For these reasons, the strategies below are primarily focused on opportunities to improve visitor parking experiences, particularly strategies that can make visitors aware of, and comfortable using, all parking options available to them.

## **Brand Town Lots to Signal Park Once Opportunities**

Figure 9 Distinctive Branding Could Help Visitors Quickly Identify “Right Fit” Options



Branding Park Once opportunities is primarily a matter of creating consistency among all relevant parking facilities. This includes consistency of time limits, facility look and condition, and signage among all facilities primarily targeting visitor parking markets. Of particular importance for Darien will be branding that distinguishes Short-Term parking lots from Commuter Permit and Daily Parking lots, as well as between Shopper/Customer and Employee parking. These differences can be highlighted using signage with different colors and/or styles. By increasing the awareness and confidence among visitors regarding their parking options, branding could be very effective in reducing excess search traffic and increasing utilization of parking facilities that might otherwise appear to be private or permit-only (commuter) lots.

Figure 10 Branding Helps Visitors Find Affordable Off-Street Parking in Roanoke, VA



Image Source: Park Roanoke

### Invest in Pedestrian Wayfinding

Figure 11 Walk Raleigh Signage



Image Source: Walk Raleigh

Pedestrian wayfinding is a great way to communicate to visitors that they are in a Park Once district, consisting of several, attractive destinations within a short walk of each other. Effective signage encourages walking for secondary trips, while also encouraging more secondary trips by directly promoting nearby destinations throughout downtown.

### Create a Downtown Parking Map

#### *From the Route 1 Corridor Study*

- Develop a Bicycle Facilities map for posting on the Town website that illustrates bike routes and locations of bicycle parking in Darien.

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This should include all streets that have on-street parking, and all lots that offer public parking, each marked according to time restrictions and any parking rates. This can also include facilities that only provide public parking during evenings and weekends, such as the 1020 Boston Post Road (Merrill Lynch) building's lot. To promote cycling access to Downtown, the map should identify both routes into Downtown and locations of bike parking facilities.

Maps should be disseminated in print, web, and smart phone app forms.

Figure 12 Downtown Parking Map for Ventura, CA



## REDUCING DEMAND/IMPROVING MOBILITY

Following is a series of strategies to reduce parking demand, while encouraging more total trips to Downtown, by improving non-driving mobility for Downtown customers, residents, and employees.

### IMPROVE CUSTOMER ACCESS AND MOBILITY OPTIONS

The vast majority of Downtown customers and other visitors drive, and seek parking near their primary destination. There is a modest opportunity to shift some of these trips to cycling. With an aging population, and younger generations increasingly embracing transit use, including bus service, transit use among customers/visitors should be expected to grow.

A central strategy of any downtown parking management plan, however, should be ensuring that walking is the most popular mode for customer/visitor trips to secondary downtown destinations. This is a significant opportunity to reduce parking demand in Downtown Darien, despite the barriers presented by crossing conditions along the Boston Post Road. Continuing to push for more and better crossing opportunities should be a core parking management strategy of the PMP.

### Expand Bike Parking

#### *From the Route 1 Corridor Study*

- Install bike racks at community facilities, in the Central Business District, and at Darien Station.
- Develop new, short-term, bike-parking facilities at: Town Hall, the police department, the post office, Mather Fields, on Route 1 near Corbin Dr and near Center St., behind the movie theater, adjacent to municipal parking lots

#### *From the Action Plan for Revitalization of Downtown*

- Provide bike racks, and identify routes to connect to outlying neighborhoods.

Figure 13 In-Street Bike Corral as Part of Curb Extension



In the short run, providing bicycle racks at conspicuous locations throughout downtown will increase Darien’s accessibility by multiple modes. In the future, when demand merits more prominent parking options, in-street bike “corrals” can be an extremely effective and efficient use of curb space, particularly in combination with curb extensions and “left over” spaces along the curb that are too small for a standard vehicle parking space, as pictured above.

## Add Bus Stop Amenities

### *From the Action Plan for Revitalization of Downtown*

- Provide well-appointed bus or transit stops with shelters and good signage

### *From the Route 1 Corridor Study*

- Add transit-stop amenities to enhance the user experience and encourage more transit use for downtown trips.

Bus stops that offer optimal shelters and essential system information can effectively raise public awareness of, and potentially interest in, existing transit options. Conversely, bus stops with minimal amenities give a clear impression that connecting bus services are not widely used, and thus likely not very effective for common travel needs. Specific amenities recommended in the Route 1 Corridor Study include the following.

- Sheltered well-appointed bus or transit stops with seating, lighting, and clear signage
- Route and connecting service information
- Bike and moped parking
- Waste baskets
- Information Kiosks

- Landscaping, artwork, and other aesthetic enhancements

## **Improve Pedestrian Crossings**

### ***From the Action Plan for Revitalization of Downtown***

- Construct safer crosswalks, curb extensions or bulb-outs.
- Implement traffic-calming measures.

### ***From the Route 1 Corridor Study***

- Provide curb extensions, pedestrian crossing upgrades, and high-visibility un-signalized crossings to increase pedestrian safety and access
- Provide better pedestrian signals at all signalized intersections.

There are just four points within Downtown at which pedestrians can cross Boston Post Road within marked pedestrian crosswalks. None of these offer dedicated pedestrian signals. At many, it is even difficult or impossible to monitor the traffic signal to gauge when to enter the crosswalk. Several studies have identified the issues and barriers created by these conditions.

From the perspective of the Parking Study, addressing these barriers would directly support Park Once objectives via better, safer, more useful pedestrian connections between parking and Downtown destinations. Boston Post Road crossing conditions, in particular, have been noted to cause many patrons to drive between Downtown destinations, simply to avoid having to cross the street.

While the state-highway designation limits the level and types of traffic-calming that can be implemented on this street, several improvements should nonetheless be possible.

- Pedestrian signals
- Curb extensions where on-street parking has already absorbed travel-lane capacity
- Crosswalks at all legs of each intersection

These changes should be acceptable to Connecticut DOT engineers, who would have to formally approve them.

## **IMPROVE RESIDENTS' NON-DRIVING MOBILITY OPTIONS**

Downtown Darien residents benefit from walkable access to Metro-North for commuting and other trips to NYC, New Haven, and several popular destinations in between. Furthermore, residents have walkable access to several, attractive, vibrant shops, dining establishments, and service providers. The lifestyle afforded by this walkable, transit-oriented environment provides is, no doubt, a significant factor in the growth of demand for Downtown living.

This environment is not quite conducive to attracting primarily carless households. Trips to the supermarket and other “big box” retailers are not viable via available transit. Beyond these necessities, having access to a car for discretionary travel is an amenity that most Downtown Darien residents will want to maintain. There is, nonetheless, an opportunity to make one-car households more common as Downtown continues to attract new residents. Below are two mobility-improvement opportunities that use the Parking Management Plan to pursue this objective.

## CarSharing and Bike Sharing

Ready access to car-share vehicles reduces car ownership among residents, by both attracting one-car and carless households and making it viable for others to reduce car ownership to these levels. A UC Berkeley study of San Francisco's City CarShare found that when people joined the car-sharing organization, nearly 30% reduced their household vehicle ownership and two-thirds avoided purchasing another car.<sup>3</sup> Studies show that each car-sharing vehicle takes between 5 and 15 private cars off the road.

Furthermore, research indicates that car-sharing members drive 44% less than they would if using their own car, primarily because a modest cost is directly associated with each trip made.<sup>4</sup> This can translate to more active neighborhoods, as driving trips to "big box" stores are replaced by walking trips to nearby shops and services. From an economic-development perspective, shared vehicles are an attractive amenity for both residential and commercial customers. By adding an additional transportation option, car-sharing can provide urban properties with increased accessibility, helping to offset the complexities and costs associated with parking private vehicles.<sup>5</sup>

Bike sharing is another rapidly expanding mobility option that is succeeding along a similar operating model to car sharing, and offering similar mobility options to reduce car-ownership needs. The first bike sharing systems focused on large cities, and succeeded primarily in closing service gaps within rail transit networks. As technology improvements make smaller-scale bike share systems more operationally and economically viable, vendor-operated systems are proving effective in commercial centers similar to downtown Darien.

This can be particularly useful in attracting residents seeking one-car or carless lifestyle options, without having to sacrifice living space to bike storage. It can also provide an important connection to transit for downtown residents who find the walk to the train station a bit too long. Similarly, bike share can make train service a more suitable option for downtown visitors and employees, by providing a convenient option for carless travel between the station and downtown and "near downtown" areas.

## Bike Parking

### *From the Route 1 Corridor Study*

- Adopt bicycle parking requirements into the Zoning Regulations to provide short and long term bicycle parking for new developments.

Develop incentives for developers to include state-of-the-practice bike parking facilities at their projects, particularly in complement to new dwelling units. Attracting new households that value bike parking is likely to reduce average car-ownership rates among these new Downtown residents. Promoting a local bike-mobility culture will also help promote the viability of cycling

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<sup>3</sup> Robert Cervero and Yu-Hsin Tsai (2003), *San Francisco City CarShare: Travel-Demand Trends and Second-Year Impacts*, Institute of Urban and Regional Development,

<http://repositories.cdlib.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1026&context=iurd>

<sup>4</sup> Shaheen, Susan A., Cohen, Adam, and Martin, Elliot (2010), "Car-sharing Parking Policy: A Review of North American Practices and San Francisco Bay Area Case Study," Transportation Research Record. March 15, 2010.

<sup>5</sup> Cohen, Adam P., Shaheen, Susan A., and McKenzie, Ryan. "Car-sharing: A Guide for Local Planners," (2008), Institute of Transportation Studies, University of California, Davis, Research Report UCD-ITS-RP-08-16.

for accessing Darien destinations outside the downtown core. This can, in turn, help generate interest in cycling to Downtown among Darien residents who would otherwise drive.

## **IMPROVE NON-DRIVING-COMMUTE OPTIONS**

*From the 2013 SWRPA Rail Station Parking Study Update.*

- Embrace TDM policies/programs to better manage parking resources through reduced demand.

The limited parking supplies of any successful, walkable downtown district make it vital to manage the impact of employee parking demand on the availability of parking for customers. Each day, the first group of parkers to arrive in any downtown is the employees of local businesses. Without effective management, all of the best parking spaces would be filled before the first customer arrived. And, these parkers know the local parking system better than anyone, including any weaknesses in the enforcement program.

Encouraging non-drive-alone commuting among this population is an essential, but often overlooked, opportunity to reduce this impact. Even in places like Downtown Darien, where biking, carpooling, or taking local transit do not seem like viable options to most customers and business owners, there tends to be a large population of low- to medium-wage employees. And, where you have such employee populations, programs that can make biking and carpooling more viable, or transit cheaper, can have a tangible impact on parking demand.

### **Embrace TDM**

Transportation Demand Management (TDM) refers to a package of strategies that encourage travel by transit, carpooling, walking, bicycling, and teleworking. TDM programs help incentivize a shift to non-SOV modes, which can have a significant impact on both the health and well being of individuals, but also reduce strain on the traffic and parking environment. Even a small shift among local employees, from driving alone to other modes, can have a substantial impact on downtown parking demand. These programs are often administered by the business community, municipalities, a Business Improvement District, a Transportation Management Association, or similar. TDM programs have been shown to reduce commuting by single-occupant vehicle by up to 40%, particularly when financial incentives are provided.

Below are three, key TDM strategies recommended for the Parking Management Plan.

#### **Provide Commute-Friendly Bike Amenities**

In addition to the physical pedestrian and bicycle access improvements noted above, sheltered and secure bicycle parking and access to showers and changing facilities can promote the use of cycling as a means of commuting to work.

#### **Develop a Bus Pass Program**

The substantial and expanding population of Downtown service and retail employees represents a promising market for increased bus-transit commuting. This has been the primary TDM strategy for many, highly effective downtown-employee TDM programs, as it taps into latent demand for low-cost commute options, and makes it viable to maintain downtown employment without access to a personal vehicle. Typically, an organization of downtown businesses reach an

agreement with a local transit provider to bulk purchase monthly passes for all downtown employees, at a substantial discount. These passes are then provided to local employees, at cost or for free. This is perhaps something that could be approached through a partnership with CT Rides – see below.

### **Develop a Partnership with CT Rides**

CT Rides is a public resource, provided by Connecticut DOT, to facilitate commuter mobility across the state. CT Rides helps commuters assess their commute options from among a variety of alternative modes including ridesharing, transit, biking/walking and teleworking solutions. To incentivize commuters to try these options, CT Rides offers a reward program, trial ride passes, cost calculator, trip planning software, and guaranteed ride home.

CT Rides services are available directly to commuters or under an employer's account. Employers will find basic information on the benefits of supporting commute alternatives, including improved employee productivity, easier recruitment and retention, reduced absenteeism and late arrivals, improved morale and reduced parking and office space needs and costs. In addition, they get guidance on commuter tax benefits and relocation services.

CT Rides offers advice to employers, for free, if they call the customer service phone number. The Darien Parking Committee could directly engage Downtown employers to encourage them to connect with this service, and arrange direct outreach to Downtown employees. Going a step further, the committee could reach out to CT Rides directly for their input on developing a formal TDM program for Downtown Darien.